

# DISTANCE LEARNING

## The Way of the Future

by Colonel Maryetta D. Pesola

With the advent of the personal computer and the Internet, distance learning has really taken off. It allows people to take courses anywhere, anytime, and that is the key advantage. As a result, universities are developing undergraduate and graduate degree programs to meet people's needs that don't have the time to attend in-residence colleges. Just think what this potential provides to the Navy with their people on ships at sea. Likewise, distance learning allows the Air Force to get training to personnel overseas without a huge cost and provides training to all financial managers throughout the Air Force as oppose to a few.

The Air Force through Air University has had distance learning for years in the guise of the Extension Course Institute (ECI) which handled correspondence material. Later with the advent of satellites, AU established a distance learning office to broadcast courses through video and satellite. As computers evolved to incorporate CD-Rom and Internet capability so did AUs insight into its potential. As a result, AU consolidated ECI and their distance learning offices to form the Air Force Institute of Advanced Distributive Learning (AFIADL).

Distance learning within the Air Force did not come about because of the SAF/FM Guidelines; however, distance learning strongly supports the guidelines as we develop more and more courses. Recently, Mr Hale approved a partnership between SAF/FM and AFIADL. Under this partnership, AFIADL will produce approximately 30 hours of resource advisor training by the end of the year. In addition, AFIADL will take over maintenance of several of our web-based courses to include anti-deficiency, resource advisor, certifying officer, and fiscal law. Already this partnership is paying off for us. Partnering with the Joint Advance Distributive Learning Co-lab, AFIADL submitted 9 hours of the Resource Advisor course for development and testing with Sharable Courseware Objective Reference Model. This model will save time and dollars over the long run and could become a DoD standard for distance learning. The co-lab agreed and sent AFIADL \$77,000 toward completion of 9 hours of resource advisor training.

I would be remiss if I didn't mention three or four other players who have become key to producing web base financial training. Air Force Material Command has developed courses in Activity Based Costing, Earned Value Management, and Current Topics in Financial Management. The Defense Acquisition University has web base courses in the Fundamentals of System Acquisition Management, and Earned Value Management. The Assistant Secretary of the Air Force (Financial Management and Comptroller), Deputy Assistant Secretary (Budget) developed a course for the Obligation Adjustment Reporting System (OARS). Finally, Sheppard AFB is partnering with us to develop a contingency course, which should also be ready at year's end. Below is a list of the courses I have mentioned above along with their web site and the number of continuing professional education (CPE) hours associated with each course. These courses can also be found through the SAF/FM Web Site (<http://www.saffm.hq.af.mil>) under Professional Development.

COURSE TITLE	WEB LOCATION	CPE HOURS
Activity Base Costing	<a href="http://sasweb.brooks.af.mil/SASHOME/master.html">http://sasweb.brooks.af.mil/SASHOME/master.html</a>	20
Anti-Deficiency Act	<a href="http://www.saffm.hq.af.mil/FMP/ada.html">http://www.saffm.hq.af.mil/FMP/ada.html</a>	3
Certifying Officer	<a href="http://www.saffm.hq.af.mil/coaotut/">http://www.saffm.hq.af.mil/coaotut/</a>	3
Current Topics in Financial Mgt	<a href="http://sasweb.brooks.af.mil/SASHOME/master.html">http://sasweb.brooks.af.mil/SASHOME/master.html</a>	16
Earned Value Mgt Course	<a href="http://sasweb.brooks.af.mil/SASHOME/master.html">http://sasweb.brooks.af.mil/SASHOME/master.html</a>	15
Fiscal Law	<a href="http://www.saffm.hq.af.mil">http://www.saffm.hq.af.mil</a>	6
Obligation Adjustment Report Sys	<a href="http://web2.ssg.gunter.af.mil/first/training/index.html">http://web2.ssg.gunter.af.mil/first/training/index.html</a>	3
Resource Advisor	<a href="http://www.saffm/hq/af/mil/saffmra">http://www.saffm/hq/af/mil/saffmra</a>	3

Next year, we would like to get on-the-job-training (OJT) guides completed for the web besides starting one or two new projects. We will also look into converting the Reserve Financial Management Staff Officer Course (FMSOC) into a distance learning course as a test. Knowing we need a plan and direction for distance learning, we asked attendees at the May Executive Session to give us ideas as to where our distance learning program should be heading. You can help by telling your MAJCOM Professional Development points of contact what you think we should consider for continuing education. After all, our goal is to provide you the education tools to assist you on your way to senior level positions.

To conclude, I agree with many of you that it is nice to get away from the office and go to school. Unfortunately, time and money has continued to be a major obstacle in getting the training we need. As a result, only small numbers of personnel have had this opportunity. With distance learning, more people will not only have the opportunity to learn more about AF financial management but also continuing their education will make them more competitive for promotion.

